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For Release FEBRUARY 22, 1966

Approval of regulations implementing the Wilderness Act of 1964 was announced today by Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall.

Texts of the new regulations are expected to be published in the Federal Register February 22.

"Public comments and suggestions we received, based on the 'Proposed Rule-making' published in the Federal Register July 28, 1965, centered on the manner in which the Department will develop recommendations for legislation to add national park and wildlife refuge areas to the National Wilderness Preservation System," Secretary Udall said.

"The objective we have stated in the regulations is to identify and recommend for preservation as wilderness those areas which will achieve the policy of Congress as expressed in the Wilderness Act. We intend to follow the policy of the Act to its full extent so that generations of Americans to come will enjoy a finer and more meaningful life. In the process we intend to consider all relevant information and allow all who are interested a chance to be heard."

The new regulations provide for public hearings on each report before Departmental recommendations are sent to the President. Sixty days will be allowed the public to consider each proposal before the hearing date. The Governor of the State, county officials, and officials of Federal Departments and agencies may submit views at the hearing or up to thirty days thereafter.

One-third of all national park roadless areas containing 5,000 acres or more, and one-third of all such areas and roadless islands in wildlife refuges and game ranges must be reviewed in time for recommendations to be submitted to Congress by September 3, 1967, under the language of the Act. No new Federal "wilderness areas" may be created except by Act of Congress.

Wilderness Act reviews of roadless areas are under way or proposed in National Park System units in Arizona (Chiricahua, Petrified Forest, Saguaro, and Wupatki); California (Kings Canyon, Lassen Volcanic, Lava Beds, Pinnacles, and Sequoia); Florida (Everglades); Idaho (Craters of the Moon); Idaho, Montana and Wyoming (Yellowstone); Kentucky (Mammoth Cave); Kentucky, Tennessee and Virginia (Cumberland Gap); Michigan (Isle Royale); North Carolina and Tennessee (Great Smoky Mountains); North Dakota (Theodore Roosevelt); South Dakota (Badlands); Utah (Arches, Bryce Canyon, Capitol Reef, and Cedar Breaks); and Virginia (Shenandoah).

The above list includes slightly more units than are required to be reviewed during the first three-year period. This will allow some flexibility in the event unexpected delays are encountered in some of the reviews.

The Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife will announce shortly its areas to be currently reviewed.

The Geological Survey and Bureau of Mines will make the studies of applicable classes of mineral resources and will submit their reports to the Secretary. However, field operations which could tend to impair the wilderness character of an area under study could not be carried out unless reviewed by the administering bureau and authorized in writing by the Secretary.

Results of mineral studies by the Geological Survey and the Bureau of Mines of some two million acres of national forest primitive areas under current Wilderness Act review by the Department of Agriculture are expected to be published beginning this Spring, the Secretary stated.

Secretary Udall characterized the Wilderness Act as "a potent statutory vehicle for nature preservation requiring equally potent administration."

"We appreciate the interest shown by many organizations and individuals in submitting comments and suggestions which aided greatly in drafting the final regulations," he said.

(A Question and Answer review of the regulations is attached.)

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR WILDERNESS REGULATIONS

Q. Are any lands exclusively administered by the Department of the Interior now protected by the National Wilderness Preservation System?

A. No. The only lands now in the System are 9.1 million acres of national forest lands formerly classified as wilderness. The Department of the Interior administers the United States mining and mineral leasing laws as they affect these national forest lands.

Q. How can Interior's roadless areas be brought under the System?

A. The Wilderness Act specifies that reviews shall be made covering all roadless areas of 5,000 contiguous acres or more in the National Park System and all such areas and all roadless islands regardless of size in the national wildlife refuges and game ranges. The purpose of the reviews is to recommend whether the areas are suitable or not suitable for preservation as wilderness.

Q. What is a "roadless area"?

A. It is defined as a reasonably compact area of undeveloped Federal land which possesses the general characteristics of a wilderness and within which there is no improved road that is suitable for public travel by means of four-wheeled, motorized vehicles intended primarily for highway use.

Q. What is a "roadless island"?

A. It is defined as a roadless area that is surrounded by permanent waters or that is markedly distinguished from surrounding lands by topographical or ecological features such as precipices, canyons, thickets, or swamps.

Q. May new wilderness areas be established within the National Wilderness Preservation System by the Secretary of the Interior?

A. No. The Wilderness Act prohibits the establishment of wilderness areas except as established by the Act itself or by a subsequent Act of Congress.

Q. How may citizens find out which areas are being reviewed or proposed for wilderness area designation?

A. National Park Service units are listed in the attached release. The Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife will soon announce areas in which reviews will be made. Following review by these Bureaus, brochures will be released where needed, identifying roadless areas or islands and indicating which of them are tentatively recommended as suitable or not suitable for the National Wilderness Preservation System. A public hearing will be held, after sixty days notice, in the State in which the area is located. Notice of the hearing will be given in the Federal Register and in local newspapers.

Q. How many "roadless areas" are there under Department of the Interior management?

A. This will not be fully known until the Wilderness Act reviews are completed. The gross acreage of all National Park System units subject to roadless area review is 22.5 million acres. The gross acreage of all National Wildlife Refuge System units subject to review of roadless areas and roadless islands is about 24 million. Considerable areas in each are known not to qualify for Wilderness Act review, but exact boundaries and acreages are not yet available.

Q. Will State and local government officials participate in the roadless area reviews?

A. They may if they wish to. The Governor and the county commissioners will be notified at least thirty days before each hearing and will have until thirty days after the hearing to submit recommendations to the Secretary of the Interior.

Q. May lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management be preserved as wilderness?

A. Yes. P.L. 88-607, enacted subsequent to the Wilderness Act, specifies that "wilderness preservation" is one of the multiple uses that may be made of public lands classified for retention in Federal ownership for administration through the Bureau of Land Management.

Q. May mining claims be located or mineral leases be applied for in national forest wilderness areas?

A. Yes, unless the land is otherwise withdrawn from mineral use, but certain protective restrictions apply, and surface use permits must be obtained from the Forest Service, Department of Agriculture.